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ABSTRACT

This document presents an outline of competencies for early childhood directors. The outline consists of a list of seven required abilities, or goals that is divided into sublists of actions the director should perform to meet the competency goals. Directors are expected to possess the ability to: develop and maintain an effective organization; plan and implement administrative systems that effectively carry out the program's mission, goals and objectives; administer effectively a program of personnel management and staff development; foster good community relations and influence child care policy that affects the program; maintain and develop the facility; possess the legal knowledge necessary for effective management; and possess financial management ability. (JPB)

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# *Draft for Discussion*
# Competencies of Early Childhood Directors

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**DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION**
**Competencies of Early Childhood Directors**

*This list was adapted from a list prepared by Gwen Morgan of Wheelock College, based on work by Joe Perrault and Nancy Travis at Save the Children, refined through class discussion and assignments by directors from across the country who participate in administrators courses at Wheelock College.*

**Competent directors must have:**

***I. The ability to develop and maintain an effective organization.***

**A competent director must:**

1. Understand the legal form of the organization, its philosophical base, its history, and its goals.

2. Be able to sense and respond to environmental influences and to stakeholders, both external and internal.

3. Understand and comply with all applicable rules and regulations.

4. Develop a management philosophy which includes a clear mission statement, and clear objectives based on the organization's values and the needs expressed by parents in the community.

5. Develop and implement strategies for management that build teamwork and participation of staff; make effective use of time and other resources; engage in short-term problem solving and long-term planning.

6. Work with and contribute to Board development in organizations that have Boards; develop Advisory Groups where applicable.

7. Be able to evaluate the program and all its components, and use this evaluation to change and improve the program.

8. Know basic strategic planning processes.

***II. The ability to plan and implement administrative systems that effectively carry out the program's mission, goals, and objectives.***

**A competent director is ultimately responsible for:**

1. Systems for implementing curriculum, addressing all aspects of development for each child, appropriate to their individual age, culture, and level of development.

2. Regular communication with parents, that respects their values and culture and involves parents appropriately in the life of the program, and supports parents' lives, including home language; a focus on contributing to the parent/child dyad and improving the quality of life for families.

3. Nutrition and food service management.

4. Recruitment and enrollment of children, attention to separation issues for children and parents.

5. Social services and health care, appropriate to the needs of the parent group.

6. Organization of tasks and decision-making teamwork throughout the organization.

7. Systems for maintaining all aspects of the physical facility in a safe and healthy condition, and in a creative design that contributes to learning and teaching.

8. Knowledge of basic Total Quality Management concepts.

*III. The ability to administer effectively a program of personnel management and staff development.*

**In the organization as a whole, a competent director must effectively:**

1. Give and receive feedback.

2. Gather needed information through regular communication with all staff and parents.

3. Facilitate the development of community among staff, among parents, among the Board or advisory groups, and among children.

4. Maintain personal stability and confidence, self-awareness, desire for growth, the ability to change.

5. Set the stage for recruiting, accepting and retaining a diverse group of staff members.

**For staff development and support, a competent director must:**

1. Observe objectively and give positive and negative feedback in a way that helps individuals to change.

2. Motivate and challenge people and set a high standard.

3. Communicate clear expectations for performance and ensure that goals and objectives are met.

4. Possess effective training skills and knowledge of training methods.

5. Have the skills needed to hire the right person, including interviewing skills.

6. Supervise performance over time, with follow through, so that poor performance leads to termination and good performance is recognized.

7. Have knowledge of different supervisory styles and methods to meet individual needs of supervisees, appropriate to classroom staff and also appropriate for the cook, maintenance staff, office staff, and other non-classroom roles.

8. Model appropriate behavior.

9. Understand different cultural styles of interacting, leading and participating.

*IV. The ability to foster good community relations and to influence child care policy that affects the program.*

**A competent director must:**

1. Have knowledge of community services and functions, including knowledge of:

- Child care resource and referral organizations and what they offer parents and providers;
- Other child care programs-how they differ and are similar; information on salaries, fees charged, and service options; and personal relationship with other directors;
- Health services, social services, and other vendors and providers of functions needed by the program and the parents using them;
- Community-based organizations such as religious institutions that have influence on families' lives;
- Child care policies, and changes that are made in them, including regulatory policies, funding policies, and governmental structure;
- Legislative processes and how to participate in them; and
- Media and other ways to develop public support.

2. Use this knowledge to build networks and coalitions as needed.

3. Have effective skills in communication, including:

- Public speaking
- Writing letters
- Writing proposals, marketing plans, business plans
- Language skills in languages other than English
- Giving media interviews and maintaining media contacts
- Supervising or producing brochures, flyers, parent handbooks, other materials
- Maintaining regular communication with other advocates, and

- Maintaining a commitment to educate the community on issues affecting young children and their programs on a regular basis.

*V. The ability to maintain and develop the facility.*

**A competent director must have the knowledge and skills to:**

1. Establish procedures to monitor and correct in order to maintain compliance with all applicable codes - fire, safety, health, sanitation, building, and zoning.

2. Maintain all equipment to ensure safe working condition and have knowledge of procedures for maintenance and repair.

3. Establish and maintain safe security practices and equipment at all times.

4. Ensure appropriate room arrangement/space design and support the design and redesign of effective space, based on knowledge of environmental psychology and early childhood education.

*VI. The legal knowledge necessary for effective management.*

**The competent director must be able to work with legal counsel and will have general personal knowledge in the following areas:**

- Applicable regulatory standards and concepts, including the rights of licensees
- Custody issues that affect child care
- Confidentiality laws that affect child care
- Labor laws that affect child care
- Anti-discrimination laws that affect child care, employee rights
- Working knowledge of liability issues
- Health rules
- Basics of contracts that affect the center

VII. *Financial management ability.*

The competent director will assume responsibility for financial management and will have the ability to direct the accountant or other financial staff on how to present figures on income, expenditures, enrollment and other information, in ways that to inform decision-making. This includes the ability and knowledge needed to:

1. Mobilize needed resources, including the use of fundraising, marketing, unrelated business income, and governmental grants or third party purchase-of-service agreements.

2. Maintain accurate and complete financial expenditure records.

3. Use financial tools in planning:

*Effective budget planning and monitoring*

- Establishing a staffing pattern for each room
- Setting an annual budget and projections
- Conducting deviation analysis
- Conducting functional cost analysis

*Cash flow projection*

*Break-even analysis*

4. Identify federal, state, and local funding sources, both public and private.

5. Understand basic marketing concepts.

6. Develop and implement fee policies that fit the needs of the organization.

7. Develop a compensation structure that rewards retention and increased knowledge and skills of staff.

Note: The above competencies are needed by directors of centers who serve as executives, fully responsible for program operation. If the income side of the budget is someone else's responsibility, as is usually the case in public school based programs, or Head Start, the director may not need the full range of competencies. Directors of small programs, and group child care home licensees, need the competencies at a more generalist level than directors of large programs.